The Dream of Gerontius

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Florence Wilkinson

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12 September 1929

THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

Printed in England
at The Westminster Press
Harrow Road
London, W.9

The Dream of Gerontius

By

John Henry Newman
(Cardinal)

Arranged with

CONCORDANCE

and

CHRONICLE

by

"ANGLICAN"

A Contribution towards the Centenary of the
Oxford Movement

RELEASED

LONGMANS, GREEN AND CO. LTD.
39 PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON, E.C.4
NEW YORK, TORONTO
BOMBAY, CALCUTTA, AND MADRAS
1928

The author of the *Dream of Gerontius* lived a life devoted to one great object, God; and to one great end, self-development along the lines of his own nature—the reconciliation of the intellect with Faith, an end pursued by the single method of genius under whatever form it may shew itself.

A. R. Waller

HIS WILL IS OUR PEACE.

DANTE, *Paradiso III*, 85.

The " Divina Commedia " is more than a magnificent poem, more than the beginning of a language, more than the inspirer of art and the glory of a great people, it is one of those rare and solemn monuments of the mind's power which marks out the course of time by grander divisions than its centuries.

DEAN CHURCH

Had Dante himself composed *The Dream of Gerontius* as his elegy on the death of some beloved friend, it would have been universally received as altogether worthy of his superb genius. There is nothing of its kind outside of the *Purgatorio* and the *Paradiso* at all equal to the *Gerontius* for solemnizing, ennobling, and sanctifying power.

DR. WHYTE

Is not the ultimate key to Newman's history his keen and profound sense of the life, society, and principles of action presented in the New Testament? [He had] . . . that simple and severe hold of the unseen and the future which is the colour and breath, as well as the outward form, of the New Testament life.

From "Cardinal Newman's Course," by Dean Church.

CHRONICLE

"THE CARDINAL DELIGHTED IN THE OBSERVANCE OF ANNIVERSARIES"

A "CENTURY" OF DATES

1801	Feb.	21	Saturday.	John Henry Newman born.
	Apr.	9	Thursday.	Baptized.
1808	May	1	Sunday.	Went to a school at Ealing, kept by Dr. Nicholas, of Wadham College.
1811	Feb.	11	Monday.	On the first page of his first Latin verse-book, between the words "verse" and "book," he drew the figure of a solid cross, upright; and next to it a set of beads with a little cross attached.
1816	Mar.	8	Friday.	His father's banking firm failed: creditors eventually paid in full.
	Dec.	14	Saturday.	Entered at Trinity College, Oxford.
1817				"Converted."
1818	May			Obtained a Trinity scholarship of £60 for nine years.
1819	June			Name entered at Lincoln's Inn.
1822	April	12	Friday.	Elected Fellow of Oriel.
1824	June	13	Sunday.	Ordained Deacon in Christ Church, to the curacy of S. Clement's.
		24	Wednesday.	Preached his first sermon (at Worton) from the text "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening" (Ps. 104, 23). His last Anglican sermon was from the same text.
1825	Mar.			Appointed Vice-Principal of S. Alban's Hall, Oxford.
	May	29	Sunday.	Ordained Priest.
	Aug.	7	Sunday.	Celebrated his first Eucharist.
1826	July	2	Sunday.	Preached his first University sermon.
1828	Jan.	5	Saturday.	His sister Mary died.
	Mar.	14	Friday.	Instituted to the Vicarage of S. Mary the Virgin. (This edition published a hundred years after.)
1832	Dec.	8	Saturday.	Started with Hurrell Froude for journey on which
1833	June	16	Sunday.	he wrote "Lead, Kindly Light," becalmed in the Straits of Bonifacio.
	July	9	Tuesday.	Returned to England.
		14	Sunday.	University Church: listening to Keble preaching on National Apostasy, from which sermon he dated the beginning of the Oxford Movement.
1841	Feb.	27	Saturday.	Issue of Tract 90.
	Mar.	13	Saturday.	Date of Letter to Heads of Houses *re* Tract 90, which somehow was delayed.
		15	Monday.	Heads condemn Tract 90 without waiting for Newman's reply which they knew was coming
	May	20	Thursday.	Fr. J. J. Gordon heard Newman preach at S. Mary's. It was Ascension Day.

1841	May	23	Sunday.	Gordon hears him again at S. Mary's from the text: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit on my throne, even as I overcame and am set on my Father's throne."
1842	April	19	Tuesday.	Migrated to his cottage at Littlemore.
1843	Feb.	2	Thursday.	Preached in the University pulpit for the last time on the theory of development in Christian doctrine.
	Sept.	18	Monday.	Resigned the living of S. Mary's.
		25	Monday.	Last sermon as Anglican at Littlemore, containing the pathetic farewell, "O loving friends, O faithful and affectionate hearts. . . ."
1845	Oct.	3	Friday.	Resigned Oriel Fellowship.
		9	Thursday.	"Received" into the Roman Catholic Church by Father Dominic, the Passionist, at Littlemore.
	Nov.	1	Saturday.	Confirmed by Bishop Wiseman at Oscott.
1846	Feb.	23	Monday.	Left Oxford for Oscott, not to return for 32 years.
1847	Feb.	24	Wednesday.	Fr. J. J. Gordon "received."
	May	26	Wednesday.	Ordained Sub-deacon at Rome in the private chapel of Cardinal Franzoni, Prefect of Propaganda.
		29	Saturday.	Ordained Deacon at S. John Lateran.
		30	Sunday.	Ordained Priest.
1848	Feb.	2	Wednesday.	Birmingham Oratory formally inaugurated. (N.B. The Feast of the Purification was Foundation Day at Oriel.)
		24	Thursday.	Fr. J. J. Gordon and his brother William enter the congregation of the Oratory.
1849	Sept.			Visits cholera patients at Bilston.
1852	April	15	Thursday.	Oratory removes to its new home in Hagley Road.
1853	Feb.	10	Thursday.	Dr. Newman writes: "We could not have a greater loss than Fr. Gordon. He was the life of our Oratory. I do not know what we are to do without him."
		13	Sunday.	Fr. Gordon's death; aged 41. He is buried at Rednal.
1854	Dec.	8	Friday.	Pius IX issued Bull defining the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception.
1857	Aug.	26	Wednesday.	Dr. Newman is asked to undertake a new translation of the Bible. "No one has ever touched the Gospels with so much innate kinship of spirit as he." (Sanday's *Life of Christ*.)
	Sept.	14	Monday.	Accepts invitation to make a new translation of the Bible.
1863	June	7	Sunday.	Writes to Isaac Williams: "Of all human things perhaps Oxford is nearest my heart—and some Parsonages in the country."
1864	Mar.	13	Sunday.	7 a.m. Passion Sunday. He makes his "spiritual" will, "written in prospect of death."
	May	26	Thursday.	The date he gives to the "Apologia." The articles which compose it were written for *The Times* from April to June.
1865	Jan.	17	Tuesday.	"It came into my head to write it" (letter to Mr. Allies). "It" is *The Dream of Gerontius*. This is the date he has put at the head of his own fair copy.

1865	Feb.	7	Tuesday.	The date put at the end of his fair copy—the day on which, presumably, he ended the writing of the fair copy; but not necessarily, for he has given the Dream itself, in its dedication, an " appropriate " date. Thus 22 days from start to finish was the time occupied with the writing of it.
	May			The first half of it first appeared in print in *The Month* magazine. [N.B. *Not* April, as both Bellasis and Ward give.]
		25	Wednesday.	After the first portion had come out he writes (to Mr. Allies): " As to Gerontius, perhaps the second part will be a failure, so be cautious of your criticism."
	June			The second half appeared in *The Month* [N.B. *Not* May]
	July			and August: the Dream appeared in the *Catholic World*, a monthly magazine published in New York.
	Oct.	11	Wednesday.	He wrote again to Mr. Allies: " No, I assure you I have nothing more to produce of Gerontius."
	Nov.	2	Thursday.	The date he gives to the Dream at the foot of the dedication: All Souls' Day.
		22	Wednesday.	He writes to the editor of *The Month* (Fr. Coleridge, S.J.): " I am taking your suggestion and publishing Gerontius."
1866				First Edition in book form—with Dedication added.
	Mar.			*Dream of Gerontius* reviewed in the *Spectator*.
	April	21	Saturday.	He gives a first edition and inscribes it " M. J. Rhodes with the author's kind regards."
1868	Jan.	29	Wednesday.	He writes: " 'The Apologia,' the 'Oxford matter' and the ' Dream of Gerontius ' have brought me out."
	May			Charles Kingsley writes to Sir William Cope enthusiastically about the Dream.
	Nov.	30	Monday.	" Another remarkable fact is that Sir F. Doyle, Poetry Professor at Oxford, is paying me the extraordinary compliment of giving a Public Lecture on my Dream of Gerontius."
1868				The poem published in *Verses on Various Occasions*.
1868				" Praise to the Holiest " appeared in an appendix to *Hymns Ancient and Modern*.
1869				A French edition appeared.
1869				Alfred Austin writes about it in *Temple Bar*.
1869				Asked to join the Metaphysical Society: declines.
1870	July	18	Monday.	Papal Infallibility decreed " ex cathedra " at the Vatican Council.
1871				Asked to join the Metaphysical Society: again declines.
1875	May	24	Monday.	Ambrose St. John died; aged 59. Buried at Rednal. Cardinal Newman's body lies in the same grave.
1877	Dec.			Dr. Newman is made first Honorary Fellow of his old college—Trinity.

1878	Jan.	2	Wednesday.	Edward Caswall dies; aged 63. Buried at Rednal.
	Feb.			J.H.N. visits Trinity College, Oxford.
1879				Sir Mountstuart Grant-Duff, in his diary, records that Mr. Gladstone speaks of the "Dream" in the same breath with the "Divina Commedia."
	May	12	Monday.	Created Cardinal Deacon of the Holy Roman Church and of the Deaconry of San Giorgio in Velabro.
1879	Aug.	29	Friday.	Attends Birmingham Musical Festival: is charmed with Cherubini's first Requiem.
1880	May	24	Monday.	Dines at the Trinity "Gaudy."
1882	Sept.	1	Friday.	Attends the Birmingham Musical Festival, rejoicing in Cherubini's Mass.
1884	Jan.	9	Wednesday.	Visits Mark Pattison at Oxford.
	Feb.	18	Monday.	General Gordon, on the very day he entered Khartoum, gave his copy of the Dream to Frank Power.
	May			In the *Nineteenth Century* Swinburne refers to the "rhymed or rhymeless iambics as occurring here and there in the *Dream of Gerontius* having 'a genuine lyric note.'"
1885	April	7	Tuesday.	Cardinal Newman writes to Dean Church: "I have received a little book which has taken my breath away. It is the property of Mrs. Murphy, who received it from Mr. F. Power, her brother, and was given to him by Gordon at Khartoum. So Mr. Power writes in the first page; and attests that the pencil marks through the book are Gordon's. The book is the Dream of Gerontius."
1885				His portrait is painted by Millais.
1888	Jan.	1	Sunday.	He preaches for the last time.
	Oct.	29	Monday.	Mr. Gladstone wrote to Mr. Lawrence Dillon about the Dream: "It originally came into the world in grave-clothes; swathed, that is to say, in the folds of the anonymous, but it has now fairly burst them, and will, I hope, take and hold its position in the literature of the world."
	Nov.	12	Monday.	A paper on General Gordon's copy of the Dream read before the Manchester Literary Club.
1889	Dec.	25	Wednesday.	Said Mass for the last time.
1890	Aug.	10	Sunday.	Received the Last Sacraments.
	Aug.	11	Monday.	Died, at a quarter to nine in the evening, of congestion of the lungs following upon pneumonia.
		19	Tuesday.	Buried at Rednal (within the Octave of the Assumption) in the same grave as Ambrose St. John.
1891	Mar.	16	Monday.	The British Museum MS. copy (not holographic) purchased from Miss F. M. Taylor of the Convent, Brentford, to whom the Cardinal had given it.
	April	14	Tuesday.	First Edition (1866) acquired by the British Museum.
1897	Mar.			General Gordon's copy could be seen at the United Service Institution. It has the name "Gordon" in

1897	Mar.	(*continued*)	the Dedication, "separated off by pencil markings thus delicately indicating an impromptu dedication to himself."
1900	Oct.	4 Thursday.	Elgar's musical setting: first performance, at Birmingham Town Hall, Richter conducting.
1906			Maurice Francis Egan, Professor of English Literature in the Catholic University of America, brought out an edition published by Longmans.
1909			MSS. Facsimile Edition, brought out by Edward Bellasis, published by Longmans: 525 copies (numbered); it contains 6,082 words.

Cor ad Cor loquitur.

NEWMAN'S motto as Cardinal.

FRATRI DESIDERATISSIMO
JOANNI JOSEPH GORDON
ORATORII S.P.N. PRESBYTERO
CUJUS ANIMA IN REFRIGERIUM

J. H. N.

In die Comm.
Omn. Fid. Def.
1865

THE DREAM OF GERONTIUS

§ I

Gerontius

Jesu, Maria—I am near to death,
  And Thou art calling me; I know it now—
Not by the token of this faltering breath,
  This chill at heart, this dampness on my brow,
(Jesu, have mercy! Mary, pray for me!)—
  'Tis this new feeling, never felt before,
(Be with me, Lord, in my extremity!)
  That I am going, that I am no more.
'Tis this strange innermost abandonment,
  (Lover of souls! great God! I look to Thee,)
This emptying out of each constituent
  And natural force, by which I come to be.

Pray for me, O my friends; a visitant
  Is knocking his dire summons at my door,
The like of whom, to scare me and to daunt,
  Has never, never come to me before;
'Tis death,—O loving friends, your prayers!—'tis he! . . .
As though my very being had given way,
  As though I was no more a substance now,
And could fall back on nought to be my stay,
  (Help, loving Lord! Thou my sole Refuge, Thou,)
And turn no whither, but must needs decay
  And drop from out the universal frame
Into that shapeless, scopeless, blank abyss,
  That utter nothingness, of which I came:
This is it that has come to pass in me;
O horror! this it is, my dearest, this;
So pray for me, my friends, who have not strength to pray.

Assistants

Kyrie eleïson, Christe eleïson, Kyrie eleïson.
Holy Mary, pray for him.
All holy Angels, pray for him.
Choirs of the righteous, pray for him.
Holy Abraham, pray for him.
St. John Baptist, St. Joseph, pray for him.
St. Peter, St. Paul, St. Andrew, St. John,
All Apostles, all Evangelists, pray for him.
All holy Disciples of the Lord, pray for him.
All holy Innocents, pray for him.
All holy Martyrs, all holy Confessors,
All holy Hermits, all holy Virgins,
All ye Saints of God, pray for him.

Gerontius

Rouse thee, my fainting soul, and play the man;
    And through such waning span
Of life and thought as still has to be trod,
    Prepare to meet thy God.
And while the storm of that bewilderment
    Is for a season spent,
And, ere afresh the ruin on thee fall,
    Use well the interval.

ASSISTANTS

Be merciful, be gracious; spare him, Lord.
Be merciful, be gracious; Lord, deliver him.

From the sins that are past;
From Thy frown and Thine ire;
From the perils of dying;
From any complying
With sin, or denying
His God, or relying
On self, at the last;
From the nethermost fire;
From all that is evil;
From power of the devil;
Thy servant deliver,
For once and for ever.

By Thy birth, and by Thy Cross,
Rescue him from endless loss;
By Thy death and burial,
Save him from a final fall;
By Thy rising from the tomb,
By Thy mounting up above,
By the Spirit's gracious love,
Save him in the day of doom.

Gerontius

Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,
    De profundis oro te,
Miserere, Judex meus,
    Parce mihi, Domine.
Firmly I believe and truly
    God is Three, and God is One;
And I next acknowledge duly
    Manhood taken by the Son.
And I trust and hope most fully
    In that Manhood crucified;
And each thought and deed unruly
    Do to death, as He has died.
Simply to His grace and wholly
    Light and life and strength belong,
And I love, supremely, solely,
    Him the holy, Him the strong.
Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,
    De profundis oro te,

Miserere, Judex meus,
    Parce mihi, Domine.
And I hold in veneration,
    For the love of Him alone,
Holy Church, as His creation,
    And her teachings, as His own.
And I take with joy whatever
    Now besets me, pain or fear,
And with a strong will I sever
    All the ties which bind me here.
Adoration aye be given,
    With and through the angelic host,
To the God of earth and heaven,
    Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Sanctus fortis, Sanctus Deus,
    De profundis oro te,
Miserere, Judex meus,
    Mortis in discrimine.

I can no more; for now it comes again,
That sense of ruin, which is worse than pain,
That masterful negation and collapse
Of all that makes me man; as though I bent
Over the dizzy brink
Of some sheer infinite descent;
Or worse, as though
Down, down for ever I was falling through
The solid framework of created things,
And needs must sink and sink
Into the vast abyss. And, crueller still,
A fierce and restless fright begins to fill
The mansion of my soul. And, worse and worse,
Some bodily form of ill
Floats on the wind, with many a loathsome curse
Tainting the hallowed air, and laughs, and flaps
Its hideous wings,
And makes me wild with horror and dismay.
O Jesu, help! pray for me, Mary, pray!
Some angel, Jesu! such as came to Thee
In Thine own agony. . . .
Mary, pray for me. Joseph, pray for me. Mary, pray for me.

Assistants

Rescue him, O Lord, in this his evil hour,
As of old so many by Thy gracious power:—(Amen.)
Enoch and Elias from the common doom; (Amen.)
Noe from the waters in a saving home; (Amen.)
Abraham from th' abounding guilt of Heathenesse; (Amen.)
Job from all his multiform and fell distress; (Amen.)
Isaac, when his father's knife was raised to slay; (Amen.)
Lot from burning Sodom on its judgment-day; (Amen.)
Moses from the land of bondage and despair; (Amen).
Daniel from the hungry lions in their lair; (Amen.)
And the Children Three amid the furnace-flame; (Amen.)
Chaste Susanna from the slander and the shame; (Amen.)
David from Golia and the wrath of Saul; (Amen.)
And the two Apostles from their prison-thrall; (Amen.)
Thecla from her torments; (Amen.)
—so, to show Thy power,
Rescue this Thy servant in his evil hour.

GERONTIUS

Novissima hora est; and I fain would sleep,
The pain has wearied me. . . . Into Thy hands,
O Lord, into Thy hands. . . .

The Priest

Proficiscere, anima Christiana, de hoc mundo!
Go forth upon thy journey, Christian soul!
Go from this world! Go, in the name of God
The omnipotent Father, who created thee!
Go, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord,
Son of the living God, who bled for thee!
Go, in the Name of the Holy Spirit, who
Hath been poured out on thee! Go, in the name
Of Angels and Archangels; in the name
Of Thrones and Dominations; in the name
Of Princedoms and of Powers; and in the name
Of Cherubim and Seraphim, go forth!
Go, in the name of Patriarchs and Prophets;
And of Apostles and Evangelists,
Of Martyrs and Confessors; in the name
Of holy Monks and Hermits; in the name
Of holy Virgins; and all Saints of God,
Both men and women, go! Go on thy course;
And may thy place to-day be found in peace,
And may thy dwelling be the Holy Mount
Of Sion:—in the Name of Christ, our Lord.

§ 2

Soul of Gerontius

(i) I went to sleep; and now I am refreshed
A strange refreshment: for I feel in me
An inexpressive lightness, and a sense
Of freedom, as I were at length myself,
And ne'er had been before. How still it is!
I hear no more the busy beat of time,
No, nor my fluttering breath, nor struggling pulse;
Nor does one moment differ from the next.
I had a dream; yes:—some one softly said
" He's gone"; and then a sigh went round the room.
And then I surely heard a priestly voice
Cry " Subvenite "; and they knelt in prayer.
I seem to hear him still; but thin and low,
And fainter and more faint the accents come,
As at an ever-widening interval.
Ah! whence is this? What is this severance?
This silence pours a solitariness
Into the very essence of my soul;
And the deep rest, so soothing and so sweet,
Hath something too of sternness and of pain,
For it drives back my thoughts upon their spring
By a strange introversion, and perforce
I now begin to feed upon myself,
Because I have nought else to feed upon.

(ii) Am I alive or dead? I am not dead,
But in the body still; for I possess
A sort of confidence which clings to me,
That each particular organ holds its place
As heretofore, combining with the rest
Into one symmetry, that wraps me round,
And makes me man; and surely I could move,
Did I but will it, every part of me.
And yet I cannot to my sense bring home,
By very trial, that I have the power.
'Tis strange; I cannot stir a hand or foot,
I cannot make my fingers or my lips
By mutual pressure witness each to each,
Nor by the eyelid's instantaneous stroke
Assure myself I have a body still.
Nor do I know my very attitude,
Nor if I stand, or lie, or sit, or kneel.

(iii) So much I know, not knowing how I know,
That the vast universe, where I have dwelt,
Is quitting me, or I am quitting it.
Or I or it is rushing on the wings
Of light or lightning on an onward course,
And we e'en now are million miles apart.
Yet . . . is this peremptory severance
Wrought out in lengthening measurements of space,
Which grow and multiply by speed and me?
Or am I traversing infinity
By endless subdivision, hurrying back
From finite towards infinitesimal,
Thus dying out of the expansed world?

(iv) Another marvel; someone has me fast
Within his ample palm; 'tis not a grasp
Such as they use on earth, but all around
Over the surface of my subtle being,
As though I were a sphere, and capable
To be accosted thus, a uniform
And gentle pressure tells me I am not
Self-moving, but borne forward on my way.
And hark! I hear a singing; yet in sooth
I cannot of that music rightly say
Whether I hear or touch or taste the tones.
Oh what a heart-subduing melody!

Angel

My work is done,
  My task is o'er,
    And so I come,
    Taking it home,
For the crown is won,
    Alleluia,
  For evermore.

My Father gave
  In charge to me
    This child of earth
    E'en from its birth,
To serve and save,
    Alleluia,
  And saved is he.

This child of clay
  To me was given,
    To rear and train
    By sorrow and pain
In the narrow way,
    Alleluia,
  From earth to heaven.

Soul

It is a member of that family
Of wondrous beings, who, ere the worlds were made,
Millions of ages back, have stood around
The throne of God:—he never has known sin;
But through those cycles all but infinite,
Has had a strong and pure celestial life,
And bore to gaze on th' unveiled face of God,
And drank from the eternal Fount of truth,
And served Him with a keen ecstatic love.
Hark! he begins again.

Angel

O Lord, how wonderful in depth and height,
But most in man, how wonderful Thou art!
With what a love, what soft persuasive might
Victorious o'er the stubborn fleshly heart,
Thy tale complete of saints Thou dost provide,
To fill the thrones which angels lost through pride!

He lay a grovelling babe upon the ground,
Polluted in the blood of his first sire,
With his whole essence shattered and unsound,
And, coiled around his heart, a demon dire,
Which was not of his nature, but had skill
To bind and form his opening mind to ill.

Then was I sent from heaven to set right
The balance in his soul of truth and sin,
And I have waged a long relentless fight,
Resolved that death-environed spirit to win,
Which from its fallen state, when all was lost,
Had been repurchased at so dread a cost.

Oh what a shifting parti-coloured scene
    Of hope and fear, of triumph and dismay,
Of recklessness and penitence, has been
    The history of that dreary, lifelong fray!
  And oh the grace to nerve him and to lead,
  How patient, prompt, and lavish at his need!

O man, strange composite of heaven and earth!
    Majesty dwarfed to baseness! fragrant flower
Running to poisonous seed! and seeming worth
    Cloking corruption! weakness mastering power!
  Who never art so near to crime and shame,
  As when thou hast achieved some deed of name;—

How should ethereal natures comprehend
    A thing made up of spirit and of clay,
Were we not tasked to nurse it and to tend,
    Linked one to one throughout its mortal day?
  More than the Seraph in his height of place,
  The Angel-guardian knows and loves the ransomed race.

Soul

Now know I surely that I am at length
Out of the body: had I part with earth,
I never could have drunk those accents in,
And not have worshipped as a god the voice
That was so musical; but now I am
So whole of heart, so calm, so self-possessed,
With such a full content, and with a sense
So apprehensive and discriminant,
As no temptation can intoxicate.
Nor have I even terror at the thought
That I am clasped by such a saintliness.

319-330

ANGEL

All praise to Him, at whose sublime decree
The last are first, the first become the last;
By whom the suppliant prisoner is set free,
By whom proud first-borns from their thrones are cast;
Who raises Mary to be Queen of heaven,
While Lucifer is left, condemned and unforgiven.

§ 3

SOUL

I will address him. Mighty one, my Lord,
My Guardian Spirit, all hail!

ANGEL

All hail, my child!
My child and brother, hail! what wouldest thou?

SOUL

I would have nothing but to speak with thee
For speaking's sake. I wish to hold with thee
Conscious communion; though I fain would know
A maze of things, were it but meet to ask,
And not a curiousness.

ANGEL

You cannot now
Cherish a wish which ought not to be wished.

SOUL

Then I will speak. I ever had believed
That on the moment when the struggling soul
Quitted its mortal case, forthwith it fell
Under the awful Presence of its God,
There to be judged and sent to its own place.
What lets me now from going to my Lord?

ANGEL

(i) Thou art not let; but with extremest speed
Art hurrying to the Just and Holy Judge:
For scarcely art thou disembodied yet.
Divide a moment, as men measure time,
Into its million-million-millionth part,
Yet even less than that the interval
Since thou didst leave the body; and the priest
Cried " Subvenite," and they fell to prayer;
Nay, scarcely yet have they begun to pray.

(ii) For spirits and men by different standards mete
The less and greater in the flow of time.
By sun and moon, primeval ordinances—
By stars which rise and set harmoniously—
By the recurring seasons, and the swing,
This way and that, of the suspended rod
Precise and punctual, men divide the hours,
Equal, continuous, for their common use.
Not so with us in the immaterial world;
But intervals in their succession
Are measured by the living thought alone,
And grow or wane with its intensity.
And time is not a common property;
But what is long is short, and swift is slow,
And near is distant, as received and grasped
By this mind and by that, and every one
Is standard of his own chronology.
And memory lacks its natural resting-points
Of years, and centuries, and periods.
It is thy very energy of thought
Which keeps thee from thy God.

SOUL

Dear Angel, say,
Why have I now no fear at meeting Him?
Along my earthly life, the thought of death
And judgment was to me most terrible.
I had it aye before me, and I saw
The Judge severe e'en in the crucifix.
Now that the hour is come, my fear is fled;
And at this balance of my destiny,
Now close upon me, I can forward look
With a serenest joy.

ANGEL

It is because
Then thou didst fear, that now thou dost not fear.
Thou hast forestalled the agony, and so
For thee the bitterness of death is past.
Also, because already in thy soul
The judgment is begun. That day of doom,
One and the same for the collected world—
That solemn consummation for all flesh,
Is, in the case of each, anticipate
Upon his death; and, as the last great day
In the particular judgment is rehearsed,
So now too, ere thou comest to the Throne,
A presage falls upon thee, as a ray
Straight from the Judge, expressive of thy lot.
That calm and joy uprising in thy soul
Is first-fruit to thee of thy recompense,
And heaven begun.

§ 4

SOUL

But hark! upon my sense
Comes a fierce hubbub, which would make me fear,
Could I be frighted.

ANGEL

We are now arrived
Close on the judgment court; that sullen howl
Is from the demons who assemble there.
It is the middle region, where of old
Satan appeared among the sons of God,
To cast his jibes and scoffs at holy Job.
So now his legions throng the vestibule,
Hungry and wild, to claim their property,
And gather souls for hell. Hist to their cry.

SOUL

How sour and how uncouth a dissonance!

DEMONS

Low-born clods
Of brute earth,
They aspire
To become gods,
By a new birth,
And an extra grace,
And a score of merits.
As if aught
Could stand in place
Of the high thought,
And the glance of fire
Of the great spirits,

The powers blest,
The lords by right,
The primal owners
Of the proud dwelling
And realm of light,—
Dispossessed,
Aside thrust,
Chucked down,
By the sheer might
Of a despot's will,
Of a tyrant's frown,
Who after expelling
Their hosts, gave,
Triumphant still,
And still unjust,
Each forfeit crown
To psalm-droners,
And canting groaners,
To every slave,
And pious cheat,
And crawling knave,
Who licked the dust
Under his feet.

ANGEL

It is the restless panting of their being;
Like beasts of prey, who, caged within their bars,
In a deep hideous purring have their life,
And an incessant pacing to and fro.

DEMONS

The mind bold
And independent,
The purpose free,
So we are told,
Must not think
To have the ascendant.
What's a saint?
One whose breath
Doth the air taint
Before his death;

A bundle of bones,
Which fools adore,
Ha! ha!
When life is o'er,
Which rattle and stink,
E'en in the flesh.
We cry his pardon!
No flesh hath he;
Ha! ha!
For it hath died,
'Tis crucified
Day by day,
Afresh, afresh,
Ha! ha!
That holy clay,
Ha! ha!
This gains guerdon,
So priestlings prate,
Ha! ha!
Before the Judge,
And pleads and atones
For spite and grudge,
And bigot mood,
And envy and hate,
And greed of blood.

SOUL

How impotent they are! and yet on earth
They have repute for wondrous power and skill;
And books describe, how that the very face
Of the Evil One, if seen, would have a force
Even to freeze the blood, and choke the life
Of him who saw it.

Angel

In thy trial-state
Thou hadst a traitor nestling close at home,
Connatural, who with the powers of hell
Was leagued, and of thy senses kept the keys,
And to that deadliest foe unlocked thy heart.
And therefore is it, in respect of man,
Those fallen ones show so majestical.
But, when some child of grace, angel or saint,
Pure and upright in his integrity
Of nature, meets the demons on their raid,
They scud away as cowards from the fight.
Nay, oft hath holy hermit in his cell,
Not yet disburdened of mortality,
Mocked at their threats and warlike overtures;
Or, dying, when they swarmed, like flies, around,
Defied them, and departed to his Judge.

Demons

Virtue and vice,
A knave's pretence,
'Tis all the same;
Ha! ha!
Dread of hell-fire,
Of the venomous flame,
A coward's plea.
Give him his price,
Saint though he be,
Ha! ha!
From shrewd good sense
He'll slave for hire;
Ha! ha!
And does but aspire
To the heaven above
With sordid aim,
And not from love.
Ha! ha!

Soul

I see not those false spirits; shall I see
My dearest Master, when I reach His throne;
Or hear, at least, His awful judgment-word
With personal intonation, as I now
Hear thee, not see thee, Angel? Hitherto
All has been darkness since I left the earth;
Shall I remain thus sight bereft all through
My penance time? If so, how comes it then
That I have hearing still, and taste, and touch,
Yet not a glimmer of that princely sense
Which binds ideas in one, and makes them live?

Angel

Nor touch, nor taste, nor hearing hast thou now;
Thou livest in a world of signs and types,
The presentations of most holy truths,
Living and strong, which now encompass thee.
A disembodied soul, thou hast by right
No converse with aught else beside thyself;
But, lest so stern a solitude should load
And break thy being, in mercy are vouchsafed
Some lower measures of perception,
Which seem to thee, as though through channels brought,
Through ear, or nerves, or palate, which are gone.
And thou art wrapped and swathed around in dreams,
Dreams that are true, yet enigmatical;
For the belongings of thy present state,
Save through such symbols, come not home to thee.
And thus thou tell'st of space, and time, and size,
Of fragrant, solid, bitter, musical,
Of fire, and of refreshment after fire;
As (let me use similitude of earth,
To aid thee in the knowledge thou dost ask)—
As ice which blisters may be said to burn.

Nor hast thou now extension, with its parts
Correlative,—long habit cozens thee,—
Nor power to move thyself, nor limbs to move.
Hast thou not heard of those, who, after loss
Of hand or foot, still cried that they had pains
In hand or foot, as though they had it still?
So is it now with thee, who hast not lost
Thy hand or foot, but all which made up man;
So will it be, until the joyous day
Of resurrection, when thou wilt regain
All thou hast lost, new-made and glorified.
How, even now, the consummated Saints
See God in heaven, I may not explicate.
Meanwhile let it suffice thee to possess
Such means of converse as are granted thee
Though, till that Beatific Vision thou art blind;
For e'en thy purgatory, which comes like fire,
Is fire without its light.

SOUL

His will be done!
I am not worthy e'er to see again
The face of day; far less His countenance
Who is the very sun. Nathless, in life,
When I looked forward to my purgatory,
It ever was my solace to believe,
That, ere I plunged amid th' avenging flame,
I had one sight of Him to strengthen me.

ANGEL

Nor rash nor vain is that presentiment;
Yes,—for one moment thou shalt see thy Lord.
Thus will it be: what time thou art arraigned
Before the dread tribunal, and thy lot
Is cast for ever, should it be to sit
On His right hand among His pure elect,
Then sight, or that which to the soul is sight,
As by a lightning-flash, will come to thee,
And thou shalt see, amid the dark profound,
Whom thy soul loveth, and would fain approach,—
One moment; but thou knowest not, my child,
What thou dost ask: that sight of the Most Fair
Will gladden thee, but it will pierce thee too.

SOUL

Thou speakest darkly, Angel! and an awe
Falls on me, and a fear lest I be rash.

ANGEL

There was a mortal, who is now above
In the mid glory: he, when near to die,
Was given communion with the Crucified,—
Such, that the Master's very wounds were stamped
Upon his flesh; and, from the agony
Which thrilled through body and soul in that embrace
Learn that the flame of the Everlasting Love
Doth burn ere it transform. . . .

§ 5

. . . Hark to those sounds!
They come of tender beings angelical,
Least and most childlike of the sons of God.

FIRST CHOIR OF ANGELICALS

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
  And in the depth be praise:
In all His words most wonderful;
  Most sure in all His ways!

To us His elder race He gave
  To battle and to win,
Without the chastisement of pain,
  Without the soil of sin.

The younger son he willed to be
  A marvel in his birth:
Spirit and flesh his parents were;
  His home was heaven and earth.

The Eternal blessed His child, and armed,
  And sent him hence afar,
To serve as champion in the field
  Of elemental war.

To be his Viceroy in the world
  Of matter, and of sense;
Upon the frontier, towards the foe,
  A resolute defence.

ANGEL

We now have passed the gate, and are within
The House of Judgment; and whereas on earth
Temples and palaces are formed of parts
Costly and rare, but all material,
So in the world of spirits nought is found,
To mould withal and form into a whole,
But what is immaterial; and thus
The smallest portions of this edifice,
Cornice, or frieze, or balustrade, or stair,
The very pavement is made up of life—
Of holy, blessed, and immortal beings,
Who hymn their Maker's praise continually.

Second Choir of Angelicals

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
  And in the depth be praise:
In all His words most wonderful;
  Most sure in all His ways!

Woe to thee, man! for he was found
  A recreant in the fight;
And lost his heritage of heaven,
  And fellowship with light.

Above him now the angry sky,
  Around the tempest's din;
Who once had angels for his friends,
  Had but the brutes for kin.

O man! a savage kindred they;
  To flee that monster brood
He scaled the seaside cave, and clomb
  The giants of the wood.

With now a fear, and now a hope,
  With aids which chance supplied,
From youth to eld, from sire to son,
  He lived, and toiled, and died.

He dreed his penance age by age;
  And step by step began
Slowly to doff his savage garb,
  And be again a man.

And quickened by the Almighty's breath,
  And chastened by His rod,
And taught by Angel-visitings,
  At length he sought his God:

And learned to call upon His name,
  And in His faith create
A household and a fatherland,
  A city and a state.

Glory to Him who from the mire,
  In patient length of days,
Elaborated into life
  A people to His praise!

Soul

The sound is like the rushing of the wind—
The summer wind among the lofty pines;
Swelling and dying, echoing round about,
Now here, now distant, wild and beautiful;
While, scattered from the branches it has stirred,
Descend ecstatic odours.

Third Choir of Angelicals

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
  And in the depth be praise:
In all His words most wonderful;
  Most sure in all His ways!

The Angels, as beseemingly
  To spirit-kind was given,
At once were tried and perfected,
  And took their seats in heaven.

For them no twilight or eclipse;
  No growth and no decay:
'Twas hopeless, all-ingulfing night,
  Or beatific day.

But to the younger race there rose
  A hope upon its fall;
And slowly, surely, gracefully,
  The morning dawned on all.

And ages, opening out, divide
  The precious and the base,
And from the hard and sullen mass,
  Mature the heirs of grace.

O man! albeit the quickening ray,
  Lit from his second birth,
Makes him at length what once he was,
  And heaven grows out of earth;

Yet still between that earth and heaven—
  His journey and his goal—
A double agony awaits
  His body and his soul.

A double debt he has to pay—
  The forfeit of his sins,
The chill of death is past, and now
  The penance-fire begins.

Glory to Him, who evermore
  By truth and justice reigns;
Who tears the soul from out its case,
  And burns away its stains!

ANGEL

They sing of thy approaching agony,
Which thou so eagerly didst question of:
It is the face of the Incarnate God
Shall smite thee with that keen and subtle pain;
And yet the memory which it leaves will be
A sovereign febrifuge to heal the wound;
And yet withal it will the wound provoke,
And aggravate and widen it the more.

SOUL

Thou speakest mysteries; still methinks I know
To disengage the tangle of thy words:
Yet rather would I hear thy angel voice,
Than for myself be thy interpreter.

Angel

When then—if such thy lot—thou seest thy Judge,
The sight of Him will kindle in thy heart
All tender, gracious, reverential thoughts.
Thou wilt be sick with love, and yearn for Him,
And feel as though thou couldst but pity Him,
That one so sweet should e'er have placed Himself
At disadvantage such, as to be used
So vilely by a being so vile as thee.
There is a pleading in His pensive eyes
Will pierce thee to the quick, and trouble thee.
And thou wilt hate and loathe thyself; for, though
Now sinless, thou wilt feel that thou hast sinned,
As never thou didst feel; and wilt desire
To slink away, and hide thee from His sight,
And yet wilt have a longing aye to dwell
Within the beauty of His countenance.
And these two pains, so counter and so keen,—
The longing for Him, when thou seest Him not;
The shame of self at thought of seeing Him,—
Will be thy veriest, sharpest purgatory.

SOUL

My soul is in my hand: I have no fear,—
In His dear might prepared for weal or woe.
But hark! a grand mysterious harmony:
It floods me, like the deep and solemn sound
Of many waters.

ANGEL

We have gained the stairs
Which rise towards the Presence-chamber; there
A band of mighty Angels keep the way
On either side, and hymn the Incarnate God.

Angels of the Sacred Stair

Father, whose goodness none can know, but they
Who see Thee face to face,
By man hath come the infinite display
Of Thy victorious grace;
But fallen man—the creature of a day—
Skills not that love to trace.
It needs, to tell the triumph Thou hast wrought,
An Angel's deathless fire, an Angel's reach of thought.

It needs that very Angel, who with awe,
Amid the garden shade,
The great Creator in His sickness saw,
Soothed by a creature's aid,
And agonised, as victim of the Law
Which He Himself had made;
For who can praise Him in His depth and height,
But he who saw Him reel amid that solitary fight?

SOUL

Hark! for the lintels of the presence-gate
Are vibrating and echoing back the strain.

Fourth Choir of Angelicals

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
  And in the depth be praise:
In all His words most wonderful;
  Most sure in all His ways!

The foe blasphemed the Holy Lord,
  As if he reckoned ill,
In that He placed His puppet man
  The frontier place to fill.

For even in his best estate,
  With amplest gifts endued,
A sorry sentinel was he,
  A being of flesh and blood.

As though a thing, who for his help
  Must needs possess a wife,
Could cope with those proud rebel hosts,
  Who had angelic life.

And when, by blandishment of Eve,
  That earth-born Adam fell,
He shrieked in triumph, and he cried,
  " A sorry sentinel;

The Maker by His word is bound,
  Escape or cure is none;
He must abandon to his doom,
  And slay His darling son."

ANGEL

And now the threshold, as we traverse it,
Utters aloud its glad responsive chant.

Fifth Choir of Angelicals

Praise to the Holiest in the height,
  And in the depth be praise:
In all His words most wonderful;
  Most sure in all His ways!

O loving wisdom of our God!
  When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
  And to the rescue came.

O wisest love! that flesh and blood
  Which did in Adam fail,
Should strive afresh against the foe,
  Should strive and should prevail;

And that a higher gift than grace
  Should flesh and blood refine,
God's Presence and His very Self,
  And Essence all divine.

O generous love! that He who smote
  In man for man the foe,
The double agony in man
  For man should undergo;

And in the garden secretly,
  And on the cross on high,
Should teach His brethren and inspire
  To suffer and to die.

§ 6

ANGEL

Thy judgment now is near, for we are come
Into the veiled presence of our God.

SOUL

I hear the voices that I left on earth.

ANGEL

It is the voice of friends around thy bed,
Who say the " Subvenite " with the priest.
Hither the echoes come; before the Throne
Stands the great Angel of the Agony,
The same who strengthened Him, what time He knelt
Lone in the garden shade, bedewed with blood.
That Angel best can plead with Him for all
Tormented souls, the dying and the dead.

Angel of the Agony

Jesu! by that shuddering dread which fell on Thee;
Jesu! by that cold dismay which sickened Thee;
Jesu! by that pang of heart which thrilled in Thee;
Jesu! by that mount of sins which crippled Thee;
Jesu! by that sense of guilt which stifled Thee;
Jesu! by that innocence which girdled Thee;
Jesu! by that sanctity which reigned in Thee;
Jesu! by that Godhead which was one with Thee;
Jesu! spare these souls which are so dear to Thee,
Who in prison, calm and patient, wait for Thee;
Hasten, Lord, their hour, and bid them come to Thee,
To that glorious Home, where they shall ever gaze on Thee.

SOUL

I go before my Judge. Ah! . . .

Angel

. . . Praise to His Name!
The eager spirit has darted from my hold,
And, with the intemperate energy of love,
Flies to the dear feet of Emmanuel;
But, ere it reach them, the keen sanctity,
Which with its effluence, like a glory, clothes
And circles round the Crucified, has seized,
And scorched, and shrivelled it; and now it lies
Passive and still before the awful Throne.
O happy, suffering soul! for it is safe,
Consumed, yet quickened, by the glance of God.

Soul

Take me away, and in the lowest deep
There let me be,
And there in hope the lone night-watches keep,
Told out for me.
There, motionless and happy in my pain,
Lone, not forlorn,—
There will I sing my sad perpetual strain,
Until the morn.
There will I sing, and soothe my stricken breast,
Which ne'er can cease
To throb, and pine, and languish, till possest
Of its Sole Peace.
There will I sing my absent Lord and Love:—
Take me away,
That sooner I may rise, and go above,
And see Him in the truth of everlasting day.

§ 7

Angel

Now let the golden prison ope its gates,
Making sweet music, as each fold revolves
Upon its ready hinge. And ye great powers,
Angels of Purgatory, receive from me
My charge, a precious soul, until the day,
When, from all bond and forfeiture released,
I shall reclaim it for the courts of light.

Souls in Purgatory

1. Lord, Thou hast been our refuge:
   in every generation;
2. Before the hills were born, and the world was:
   from age to age Thou art God.
3. Bring us not, Lord, very low:
   for Thou hast said, Come back again, ye sons of Adam.
4. A thousand years before Thine eyes are but as yesterday:
   and as a watch of the night which is come and gone.
5. The grass springs up in the morning:
   at evening-tide it shrivels up and dies.
6. So we fail in Thine anger:
   and in Thy wrath we are troubled.

7. Thou hast set our sins in Thy sight:
   and our round of days in the light of Thy countenance.
8. Come back, O Lord! how long:
   and be entreated for Thy servants.
9. In Thy morning we shall be filled with Thy mercy:
   we shall rejoice and be in pleasure all our days.
10. We shall be glad according to the days of our humiliation:
    and the years in which we have seen evil.
11. Look, O Lord, upon Thy servants and on Thy work:
    and direct their children.
12. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us:
    and the work of our hands, establish Thou it.

Glory be to the Father,
and to the Son,
and to the Holy Ghost.

As it was in the beginning,
is now,
and ever shall be:

world without end.
Amen.

Angel

Softly and gently, dearly-ransomed soul,
  In my most loving arms I now enfold thee,
And, o'er the penal waters, as they roll,
  I poise thee, and I lower thee, and hold thee.

And carefully I dip thee in the lake,
  And thou, without a sob or a resistance,
Dost through the flood thy rapid passage take,
  Sinking deep, deeper, into the dim distance.

Angels, to whom the willing task is given,
  Shall tend, and nurse, and lull thee, as thou liest;
And Masses on the earth, and prayers in heaven,
  Shall aid thee at the Throne of the Most Highest.

Farewell, but not for ever! brother dear,
  Be brave and patient on thy bed of sorrow;
Swiftly shall pass thy night of trial here,
  And I will come and wake thee on the morrow.

Ex
umbris
et
imaginibus
in
Veritatem

His own inscription for his own memorial tablet.

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.

And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.

And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful.

And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.

He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.

CONCORDANCE

All words (except Angel, God, Holy, Lord, Soul) which occur more than twenty times have the number of times they occur shown within brackets.

Words rejected from various states of the poem are printed in italics.

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God is Love

Come unto Me
and
I will give you rest

Thou hast made us for Thyself
and our hearts are restless
till they rest
in
Thee